
Fact Sheet

COEUR D'ALENE RIVER BASIN



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION 10

August 2000

Understanding Risks to People and the Environment in the Basin: The Foundation for Making Cleanup Decisions

Evaluation of Risks to Basin Flora and Fauna Now Available for Review

EPA's assessment of the metals-related risks to plants and animals in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin is now available for public review and comment. The assessment, called the Ecological Risk Assessment, is another important step forward in understanding the risks posed by mining-related contamination in the Basin. The Ecological Risk Assessment, along with the Human Health Risk Assessment released by the State of Idaho last month, are two of the main tools that will be used to guide the development of cleanup strategies for the Basin.

The Ecological Risk Assessment evaluates environmental data from many sources including the States of Idaho and Washington, the Coeur d'Alene and Spokane Tribes and several federal agencies and universities. Using these data, EPA examined how the metals contamination in the Basin is affecting area fish and wildlife and their habitats. The assessment evaluated more than 80 representative species of plants and animals and six different habitat types from the Idaho/Montana border to the Spokane River Arm of Lake Roosevelt in Washington. Based on this extensive evaluation, the assessment summarizes the overall condition of the Basin environment and indicates the levels of lead, arsenic, cadmium, zinc and other metals that may negatively affect the plants and animals evaluated.

Learn More and Give EPA Your Input

The Ecological Risk Assessment is now available for you to review at the Basin information repositories and on EPA's webpage (see the end of this fact sheet for specific locations and webpage address). **Written comments will be accepted until October 6th. Comments should be sent to Anne Dailey, Project Manager, USEPA Region 10, Mailstop ECL-113, 1200 6th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101.**

Also, the September 6th meeting of the Citizens' Advisory Committee RI/FS Task Force will include an introduction to the Ecological Risk Assessment. The meeting will be held from 7 to 9 pm at the Coeur d'Alene Inn (not the Coeur d'Alene Resort) on Appleway in Coeur d'Alene. Call Dick Martindale in Coeur d'Alene at 208-664-4588, for more information.

Comment Period for Human Health Risk Assessment Extended to October 16th.

For more information contact Rob Hanson at IDEQ, 208-373-0290. Send written comments to Rob at: 1410 N. Hilton, Boise, ID 83706.

Why Do An Ecological Risk Assessment?

EPA's mandate is to protect both the health of people and the health of the environment. While a top priority is protecting children in the Basin from exposure to lead, we are also concerned about protecting and restoring the health of the environment in the Basin. Our environmental goal for the Basin is to minimize the impacts of pollution so that a functioning ecological system can be maintained over the long-term. For the purposes of the risk assessment, a functioning ecological system is defined as having:

- soil, sediment, water quality, food sources and habitat conditions that can support natural populations of plants and animals;
- no direct adverse effects on legally protected species (such as threatened and endangered species) and;
- habitat conditions conducive to recovery of legally protected species.

What Did We Find Out?

The Ecological Risk Assessment confirms that these conditions do not exist in many areas of the Basin. High concentrations of metals are

widespread in soil, sediment and surface water in the Basin and these metals pose substantial risks to plants and animals. Nearly all plant and animal species evaluated showed adverse effects from the metals concentrations present in the Basin. Some species showed lethal effects from exposure to metals.

What Happens Next?

In order to return the Basin environment to a more functional state, levels of contamination must be significantly reduced. Recognizing that this will likely take many years to achieve, EPA is proposing to set interim goals for environmental cleanup. Setting interim goals will provide a way for us to measure progress toward cleanup as work occurs in the Basin. EPA will work with people in the Basin to set the appropriate interim goals during the next phases of the RI/FS process.

The specific cleanup actions needed to protect people, plants and animals in the Basin will be the subject of an open public discussion over the next several months. The State of Idaho and EPA will be working closely with the Basin communities to decide the best ways to move forward with cleanup on both fronts. There are many ways to make sure your voice is heard in this process -- please contact Dick Martindale for more information.

SIGN UP FOR SAMPLING...

People living east of Harrison with children under seven or who use a private well for drinking water can sign up for EPA's sampling program by calling toll free 1-800-284-0399. Sampling will occur either this fall or next spring.

Where to Review Documents:

Harrison City Hall
100 Frederick Street
Harrison, ID 83833
208-689-3212

North Idaho College Library
1000 Garden Avenue,
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
208-769-3355

Spokane Public Library
906 West Main Avenue,
Spokane, WA, 99201-0976
509-626-5336

Wallace Public Library
415 River Street,
Wallace, ID 83873
208-752-4571

Coeur d'Alene Field Office
1910 Northwest Boulevard, Suite 208,
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
208-664-4588

EPA's Webpage address: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/cda>

Contacts

If you have questions or need more information, please call Marianne Deppman, EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator at 206-553-1237 or toll free at 1-800-424-4372 or Dick Martindale EPA's Community Liaison, in Coeur d'Alene at 664-4588.



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

EPA Region 10
Community Relations and Outreach
1200 Sixth Avenue, ECO-081
Seattle, Washington 98101-1128

BULK RATE
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
U.S. EPA
Permit No. G-35

Coeur d'Alene River Basin Fact Sheet
Ecological Risk Assessment
Now Available